

DESCRIBING THE THREE PHASES OF THOMAS HARDY'S WRITINGS

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ABSTRACT

In addition to being well-known as a novelist and short-story writer, Thomas Hardy desired to be recognized as a poet. There isn't a single critical work dedicated to him that focuses just on his short tales. The topic has long been associated with original sin, pessimism, and voluntarism. However, if the topic is examined once more, a completely different finding will be made. As a result, three-phase patterns will be chosen for a case study to shed light on some facts and conclusions. The first step is the portrayal of the struggle between character and environment in light of Darwinism; the second stage is the study of rationality from the perspectives of religion and feminism, and the third stage is the expression of optimism from the standpoint of symbols.

Keywords: Novels; wessex; destiny; Casterbridge

INTRODUCTION

In the late Victorian era, Thomas Hardy (1840–1928) was a literary titan. "The death of Thomas Hardy leaves English literature without a leader," Virginia Woolf said. *Jude the Obscure* is the most contentious of all of his literary works. It criticizes the irrational schooling system, the inhuman institution of marriage, religious hypocrisy, and the entire capitalist system in late Victorian times, and it naturally drew the most attention from the critical world in Britain throughout the nineteenth century.

Thomas Hardy is a multi-talented writer. He is a multi-talented writer whose works include short tales, novels, poetry, and theatre, all of which show his understanding of the very troubling social and theological challenges of his day. His paintings also demonstrate his understanding and sympathy for the poor, who faced the burden of social injustice as a result of Victorian moral rules, which were especially discriminating towards women. Hardy's works offer a caustic critique of Victorian attitudes toward women, their devotion to outdated Church ideas, their injustices, the lack of equal access to educational and legal institutions, and the industrial revolution's catastrophic interruptions of agricultural life.

THREE PHASES OF THOMAS HARDY'S WRITINGS

The early years, the middle years, and the later years are the three periods of Hardy's work. These three eras generally correlate to his two literary genres: poetry and fiction, with a return to poetry in between. Because Hardy wrote both novels and poetry in the last phase, as well as in the first, such a separation should not be thought of as watertight and strict. He authored three novels between 1867 and 1872, while he was in his late twenties and early thirties, one of which, *The Poor Man and the Lady*, was never published. *Desperate Remedies*, a less opinionated narrative with a convoluted storyline, had a mediocre response, while *Under the Greenwood Tree*, a hilarious idyllic novel, showcased his own style of writing. It also mirrored Hardy's early attempts to depict the social transformation occurring in Victorian England. In 1872, he began distributing monthly sections of his next novel, *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, which was published a year later because of its popularity. Hardy's literary career began around this time, and his next book, *Far from the Madding Crowd*, had a female protagonist wooed by three suitors. The first of the 'Wessex Novels,' with Wessex as the backdrop, was *Far from the Madding Crowd*. Wessex is a fictional region based in the south and southwest of England, primarily in Dorset, where many of his novels are set. "Wessex has grown so ubiquitous, and has been so intimately identified with Thomas Hardy's works, that we might easily forget that Hardy coined the term—or at the very least revived it from centuries of obscurity."

His middle-period works had a mixed reception. *The Return of the Native* was a huge hit, while others like *The Trumpet Major*, set during Napoleon's reign, and two more, *A Laodicean* (1881) and *Two on a Tower* (1882), were flops. His later books, *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, and *Jude the Obscure*, are his best-known works, and they deal with contemporary socio-economic themes while portraying working-class people sympathetically. While *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* is a critique of society's sexual mores, *Jude the Obscure* is a critique of the late-nineteenth-century educational system. Both works were met with hostility because they questioned Victorian sexual morality, prompting Hardy to abandon fiction in favour of poetry.

Any discussion of Hardy would be inadequate without a mention of Hardy the poet. When his early poems did not receive a positive reaction, he moved on to writing fiction. Later, he returned to poetry, and by the turn of the century, he had written entirely poetry (in Hardy's later phase). Hardy's first collection of poetry, *Wessex Poems*, was released in 1898, followed by the three-volume epic drama *The Dynasts* (1904–08) and other war poems set in the setting of the Boer Wars and World War I.

HARDY'S CLASSIFICATION OF HIS OWN NOVELS

Hardy has divided his works into three categories:

1. Novels of character and Environment (Rural Studies): Under the Greenwood Tree, Far from the Madding Crowd, The Return of the Native, The Mayor of Casterbridge, Tess of the D'Urbervilles, and Jude the Obscure.
2. Romances and Fantasies: A Pair of Blue Eyes, A Group of Noble Dames and The Well-Beloved.
3. It was only in the novels of the first category which Thomas Hardy became associated as one of the finest English novelists.

Thomas Hardy and the novel realism

Hardy was a well-read guy, and his literary and classical references in his writings attest to the huge wealth of information he possessed in his mind. He was able to extract things from his memory that he had heard from his personal encounters with people in rural England and from reading newspaper articles, and he incorporated them into his books. He was a good prose writer as well as a poet, and his writings demonstrate both his ability to articulate himself and his deep empathy for rural and disadvantaged people.

Hardy's adult life was plagued because he saw the issues, misery, and lack of educational chances that peasants and rural people faced. He was also a harsh critic of society's sexual norms, which he believed favoured males and mistreated women. He seldom expressed his anguish other than via his works. "Every belief, tradition, etc., depicted therein may be relied on as actual records of the same — and not creations of mine," Hardy reportedly informed his friend Edward Clodd of his works.

Hardy's books are realistic fiction. In literature, what is realism? A basic definition of realism in content is an accurate depiction of reality, with a particular emphasis on depicting middle-class living. In the Victorian era, realistic books focused on the average man, particularly the problems of the lower classes, particularly as they attempted to rise up the ranks. As a result, these novels became considerably more realistic. The Victorian fascination with this genre known as social realism is exemplified by Charles Dickens' Great Expectations and Thomas Hardy's Jude the Obscure. Realism is sometimes described as a "slice of life literature" that depicts a careful observation of modern life. Realism in form refers to a literary method that avoids the use of imagery or fancy language to convey plot components such as setting, characters, themes, and so

on. Writers that express realism utilize straightforward, uncomplicated language. In novels, realism has the following characteristics:

- An emphasis on the here and now
- Attention to specific action and verifiable consequences
- Realists evoke common actions, present surface details, and emphasize the minor catastrophes of the middle class
- They employ simple direct language and write about issues of conduct
- Characterization is very important. There is often an abundance of characters and social types.

Hardy's Wessex

The Wessex Tales are a collection of Hardy's works. The works were inspired by Thomas Hardy's Wessex, a literary region. So much so that Wessex, with its moods and fate, became a part of his characters.

Thomas Hardy was born and spent much of his adult life at Upper Brockhampton, Dorset. He was well-versed in the local customs and geography of this region of England, which are reflected in his books and poems. They play an important role in his writings. Hardy gave this portion of Southern England the mythical name of Wessex. "Hardy's meticulous research and realistic depiction of nineteenth-century rural living in Dorset...presents a microcosm of human life through which Hardy sought to remark on the universal state of human existence." Far From the Madding Crowd, Return of the Native, The Mayor of Casterbridge, and Tess of the D'Urbervilles are all situated in Wessex. "...in Hardy's work, the natural landscape is typically depicted in great detail, making it more vital than a simple background against which the narrative develops." Hardy posits a reciprocal link between character and environment, an interplay that demonstrates humans' evolving status in the post-Darwinian Victorian age. Hardy's narrative style describes the natural environment in the same manner that he describes the look of various people and vice versa. This method places humans inside the natural world rather than dominating over it, removing the sense of power from human hands."

Hardy had been influenced by Charles Darwin, who proposed in his Origin of Species that the human species as we know it today is the outcome of natural selection, which is an unintentional selection. It is due to circumstances that several species have evolved into the human species. Natural selection is the core notion of evolution, and it refers to the process through which

organisms adapt to their surroundings. Such a claim ran counter to the widespread Christian belief in God as the Creator.

Hardy's attention to the environment indicates Darwinian theory's effect. The storyline emphasizes the importance of chance, extinction, and survival, reflecting the importance of chance, extinction, and survival in evolutionary theory. Hardy's fiction reflects Darwin's focus on the potential of circumstances to change the outcome of natural selection. Human forces are eventually made insignificant in the face of the invisible forces that appear to dominate their immediate surroundings.

SALIENT ASPECTS OF HARDY'S NOVELS

Hardy explores the social traditions that obstruct the lives of impoverished rural people in Victorian England and condemns those customs, particularly those pertaining to marriage, education, and religion, that limit those people's goals and lead them to be unhappy. Poet Philip Larkin sees such sadness, and the agony it entails, as crucial to Hardy's works:

"What is the most profoundly growing experience that Hardy's contemporary man has had? It is pain, or sadness, in my opinion, and a thorough examination of the primacy of suffering in Hardy's work should be the first job of the serious critic for whom the work is still waiting.

Hardy courageously makes a stance in his works against the harsh and stringent Victorian ideals that do not allow emotion and love that transcends social classes. Tess is punished in the eponymous novel (*Tess of the D'Urbervilles*) for having a sexual relationship with an aristocracy. Hardy wants his readers to be aware of the social standards that are imposed on men and women as moral rules, without taking into account the passion and emotion that underpins male-female interactions.

Another prominent subject is fate or chance. Chance plays a large part in Hardy's writings, virtually reducing the protagonists to puppets that are pushed up and down by fate, which is frequently malevolent in its dispensations. Despite the fact that the phrases Fate and Destiny are sometimes used interchangeably, they are not synonymous. Fate is something we have no control over. Destiny is something that gives you the opportunity to do something by taking risks. When we say that someone is destined for great things, we're implying that they can attain it by making active and intentional choices. Destiny is when we take chances despite the fact that we have no control over it. Fate refers to an uncontrollable force that guides our activities. Indeed, Hardy's primary protagonists frequently appear to be enslaved by Fate. In *Tess*' instance, Fate plays the role of tragedy. Far from the *Madding Crowd* is a book in which chance plays a significant role: "The narrative might have taken a completely different turn if Bathsheba hadn't sent the valentine, or if Fanny hadn't skipped her wedding."

HARDY'S RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

Finally, it is critical to comprehend Hardy's religious beliefs, which are mirrored in his writings. Hardy grew up in an Anglican household, although they were not very religious. The hardships and frequently terrible events of life, as well as Man's efforts while addressing them, upset him. This caused him to doubt Christianity's conventional belief in God as all-powerful and the giver of rewards and punishments for good and wicked deeds perpetrated by humanity. He struggled to reconcile the existence of evil with God's attributes of omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, and goodness repository. He replaced the Christian God with the Immanent Will, a power that governs the cosmos via indifference, arbitrariness, and caprice rather than an ordered divine manner. Hardy felt that the cosmos was devoid of significance and that the blind and unconscious will should dominate it instead of the divine power. Despite his continued membership in the church, he discovered that organized Christianity, with its belief in a divine and powerful God, was irreconcilable with the human misery he saw all around him. Hardy formed "a coherent world-view tinted with philosophical idealism through the conceptions of Chance and Time, Circumstances, Fate, Nature, Providence, Nemesis, and Will."

CONCLUSION

Thomas Hardy (1840–1928) lived between the turn of the twentieth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century when he wrote the novel. The Victorian era was a pivotal time in history, with significant developments taking place. Hardy's topic was influenced by Schopenhauer's cryptic notion of voluntarism and dismal pessimism, as well as the rudiment of feminism. Hardy is often seen as a pessimist and a voluntarist nowadays. Some even suggest that while the author enjoyed the feminine image in *Jude the Obscure*, it also made him sigh with sadness. Sue's feminist conscience began to develop, but she lacked thoroughness. It may be stated that Thomas Hardy is neither a pessimist nor a voluntarist, and the work instils in readers a sense of benevolence, fortitude to face hard truth, and logic.

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